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(73) Proprietors:

- **PHILIPS ELECTRONICS UK LIMITED**
Croydon CR9 3QR (GB)
- Designated Contracting States:
GB
- **Philips Electronics N.V.**
5621 BA Eindhoven (NL)
- Designated Contracting States:
DE FR NL

(72) Inventors:

- Knapp, Alan George, c/o Philips Research Lab.
Surrey, RH1 5HA (GB)
- Shannon, John Martin, c/o Philips Research Lab.
Surrey, RH1 5HA (GB)

(74) Representative: **Williamson, Paul Lewis et al**
Philips Electronics UK Limited
Patents and Trade Marks Department
Cross Oak Lane
Redhill, Surrey RH1 5HA (GB)

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Description

This invention relates to an optical touch input device comprising an array of sensing elements each of which comprises a photosensitive device responsive to light input from a light source and a switching device. The invention relates also to a display device incorporating such an optical touch input device.

Optical touch input devices of the above kind can be used as means for inputting information, for example in the form of numerals, characters, pictures and the like, and may be employed for example as an interface in a computer system. Information can be entered by a user into the system by writing over the array with a light pen, the movement of the pen being detected by monitoring the behaviour of the sensing elements. An example of such a device is described in US-A-4345248. This device comprises also a matrix liquid crystal display, the array of sensing elements being integrated with the array of display elements in a common panel. The sensing elements are arranged in rows and columns and are connected to drive and detection circuits via row and column conductors with the photosensitive device of a sensing element being coupled to respective row and column conductors through its switching device, which comprises a TFT (thin film transistor). The photosensitive device comprises a pair of pn junctions coupled back to back and becomes conductive when illuminated. As such the photosensitive devices are responsive to various levels of illumination, and can respond to ambient illumination in addition to light from a light pen. The sensing element array is operated by applying a gating signal to the TFTs of each row in turn so as to connect the photosensitive devices of the row of sensing elements to a detection circuit which is responsive to an increase in the conductance of a photosensitive device caused by illumination from a light pen. Consequently, for an input to be detected the illumination of a sensing element must coincide with the gating of the TFT of the sensing element concerned.

In US-A-4655552 there is described a matrix liquid crystal display device with an integrated light sensing element array in which the arrays of display and sensing elements are addressed via separate sets of row and column conductors. Each sensing element comprises a photodiode and an output diode connected back to back between a row conductor and a column conductor, and a storage capacitor connected at its one side to the node between the two diodes and at its other side to the row conductor. The photodiode produces a leakage current which is generally proportional to the level of incident light. A scanning signal is periodically applied to the row conductor while a fixed potential is applied to the column conductor and the condition of the sensing element is determined by sensing the current flow in the column conductor during scanning which is dependent on the potential existing at the node between the photodiode and output diode. The sensing response of this type of

sensing element is dependent both on light and time. The potential at the node changes in the interval between scanning according to the level of illumination applied to the photodiode and also the time for which that illumination is applied. The sensing element has an integrating function and measures the total amount of light which falls on the photodiode in the interval between scanning and can not discriminate between a high level of light intensity applied for a short time and a comparatively low level of light intensity applied for a longer time. This can lead to problems in operation. Thus, for example, a relatively high level of ambient illumination could produce the same response as that achieved with a light pen. Moreover, with this type of sensing element there will be a limit as to the speed at which the pen can be moved over the sensing elements for a given level of ambient illumination if detection is to be ensured.

Further examples of optical touch input devices comprising arrays of sensing elements are described in EP-A-0490683 and EP-A-0491436. These devices can also suffer from similar kinds of operational problems in discriminating intended light inputs. In the former case, each sensing element includes a FET transistor whose gate-channel capacitance is periodically charged and a photoconductive device connected to the gate of the transistor through which charge stored in the gate-channel capacitance is discharged upon the photoconductive device being illuminated. In the latter case, each sensing element includes a capacitor which is periodically charged and a photosensitive element such as a photodiode which is connected across the capacitor and discharges the capacitor upon being illuminated.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an improved optical touch input device.

More particularly, it is an object of the invention to provide an optical touch input device in which the sensing elements are adapted to distinguish more clearly between an intended input, for example from a light pen, and, for example, the effects of ambient light.

According to the present invention, there is provided an optical touch input device comprising an array of sensing elements, each of which sensing elements comprises a photosensitive device responsive to a light input from a light source, a switching device, and a charge storage means which is charged periodically by operation of the switching device, and detection means connected to the sensing elements for detecting periodically the state of charge of their charge storage means, the photosensitive device comprising a part of a discharge switch circuit having a light intensity operational threshold characteristic which is connected to the charge storage means and which independently of the operation of said switching device switches to discharge the charge storage means in response to light falling on the photosensitive device which is at or above a predetermined minimum intensity level and which when the light falling on the photosensitive element is below the predetermined minimum intensity level does not switch

to discharge the charge storage means. In this device, therefore, the sensing elements are rendered capable of readily distinguishing between light from a light source, for example a light pen, and ambient light, assuming that the former has greater intensity than the latter. The discharge circuit introduces an optical threshold effect wherein the state of a sensing element, and more particularly the charge state of the charge storage means; for example a capacitor, is changed only in response to the sensing element being exposed to illumination of sufficient level so as to reach the optical threshold of the sensing element. In practice, the threshold level can be set by selecting component values so that it lies above the level which can be expected for typical ambient lighting but below the level which can be achieved by known light sources, for example incorporated in a light pen. Consequently, a clear, unambiguous indication of "touching" of the sensing elements is obtained and the possibility of a sensing element being affected by light from ambient surroundings to cause an unwanted indication is prevented, or at least significantly reduced. Moreover, the prolonged exposure of the sensing elements to ambient lighting levels has no effect.

The switching behaviour of the discharge switch circuit ensures a desirable positive response to intended inputs and is advantageous in obtaining a fast response which is needed if rapid pen movements are to be detected. Implementation of the circuit can be simple. Conveniently, the switch circuit of each sensing circuit includes switch means, for example a field effect transistor, connected across the charge storage means and operable by control means which includes the photo-sensitive device. With such a circuit the threshold level can be readily selected. The control means may comprise a photosensitive potential divider circuit. Alternatively, the control means may comprise a photovoltaic circuit, for example comprising one or more photodiodes, producing a voltage in response to illumination. When the incident illumination exceeds the predetermined intensity level, the control means operates the switch means to discharge the charge storage means upon the voltage of its control (gate) electrode reaching its operating threshold voltage. Switch means comprising field effect transistors have a fairly sharply defined gate threshold for switching. This switching of the switch means occurs very rapidly and consequently the sensing element is capable of responding to illumination of very short duration, as would happen if the light source being moved over the array of sensing element quickly.

Although the sensing elements require additional components, this does not cause undue complication. In practice, the array of sensing elements is preferably formed on an insulating support using thin film technology to fabricate the components and their interconnections. Thus the switching devices and switch means may comprise thin film transistors.

Preferably, the array of sensing elements is ad-

dressed via sets of row and column conductors to which the switching devices are connected and each sensing element is driven by applying a selection signal to an address conductor of one set to turn on the element's switching device and by applying at the same time a voltage signal to the associated address conductor of the other set whereby the charge storage means is charged according to the level of the applied voltage. If, thereafter, the sensing element is illuminated by the light source the charge storage means is discharged. The charge state of a sensing element can then be detected when the sensing element is next addressed, by sensing the charging characteristics. Thus detection is not dependent on the simultaneous illumination of the sensing element, and sensing elements illuminated at any time in the interval between successive addresses can be identified. Consequently, the possibility of illuminated sensing elements being undetected due to fast movement of the light pen is avoided.

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- In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the optical touch input device is combined with a matrix display device comprising an array of display elements each of which comprises a display element electrode, with the array of sensing elements being integrated with the array of display elements on a common support. The display elements may each include a switch element such as a TFT and in this case both the array of sensing elements and the array of display elements may share the same sets of row and column address conductors for convenience. In this case, the selection signals applied for example to the row conductors to operate the switching devices of the sensing elements serve also to operate the switching elements of the display elements, and the data signals for the display elements which are applied to the column conductors serve as the voltage signals for charging the charge storage means of the sensing elements. An integrated active matrix display device and optical touch input device driven in this manner is described in EP-A-0491436.

An optical touch input device, and particularly an integrated optical touch input and liquid crystal display device, in accordance with the invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram of the integrated optical touch input and liquid crystal display device; Figure 2 is a schematic circuit diagram of a part of an optical touch input/display panel of the device illustrating particularly one form of a typical sensing element combined with a picture element of the panel;

Figure 3 illustrates typical waveforms and relative

timings present in operation of the device of Figures 1 and 2; and
 Figure 4 is a schematic circuit diagram, similar to Figure 2, illustrating another form of sensing element.

Although the particular embodiment of the invention which will be described is in the form of an integrated display/optical touch input device, it should be understood that the invention is not restricted to such integrated devices but relates to optical touch input devices generally, either as a stand-alone device for use as an input device to, for example, a computer system or in combination with a display device other than in an integrated manner, for example as a device for overlaying a display screen but fabricated separately therefrom.

Referring now to Figure 1, the integrated optical touch input/display device comprises an active matrix addressed liquid crystal display panel, 10, having a row and column array of individually operable picture elements which consists of m rows (1 to m) with n horizontally arranged picture elements (1 to n) in each row. Each picture element, referenced at 12, is located at a respective intersection between crossing sets of m row address conductors 14 and n column address conductors 16. Only a few of the picture elements are shown in Figure 1, for clarity. The panel is suitable to provide a datagraphic display or a picture display.

The panel 10 also comprises a matrix array of sensing elements, 18, integrated with the array of picture elements, there being one sensing element located adjacent each picture element 12, except for the first column of picture elements, giving a high resolution sensing capability.

The circuit of an example of one typical combination of picture and sensing elements is shown in Figure 2. The picture element 12 comprises a switching device in the form of a thin film field effect transistor, TFT, 20 connected with a liquid crystal display element 21, the impedance of the display element being represented by a capacitor. The gates of all TFTs 20 of the picture elements in one row are connected to a respective one of the row address conductors 14. The sources of all TFTs 20 of picture elements in one column are connected to a respective one of the column address conductors 16. The drain terminals of the TFTs 20 are connected to a first electrode 22 of their associated display elements 21. As in standard practice in matrix liquid crystal display devices using TFT switches, the sets of row and column address conductors 14 and 16, the TFTs 20, and the display element first electrodes 22 are all carried on a transparent supporting plate of insulating material, for example glass. The panel 10 comprises a second transparent supporting plate arranged parallel to, and spaced from, this supporting plate, which second plate carries a continuous transparent conductive layer constituting an electrode, 23, common to all display elements. Twisted nematic liquid crystal material is disposed between

the two plates, the plates being sealed together around their periphery. The opposing plates are provided internally with orientation layers and externally with polarising layers in the usual manner.

Each sensing element 18 includes a switch device comprising a TFT 24. In similar manner to the TFTs 20 of the picture elements, the gates of all TFTs 24 of sensing elements in the same row and connected to a respective one of the row address conductors 14 and the sources of all TFTs 24 of sensing element in the same column are connected to a respective one of the column address conductors 16. The drain of the TFT 24 of a sensing element is connected to one side of a charge storage means 25 in the form of a capacitor. The other side of the capacitor is connected to an adjacent row address conductor 14 associated with the next row of picture/sensing elements. In an alternative arrangement the capacitor of a sensing element may instead be connected to a dedicated auxiliary row conductor which extends in the row direction parallel to and between adjacent row address conductors 14 and which is common to the capacitors of all sensing elements in a row. In a further alternative arrangement, the source of the TFT 24 may be connected to the same column address conductor 16 as the TFT 20 rather than the adjacent column conductor associated with the adjacent column of picture elements as shown.

The sensing element 18 further includes a discharge circuit connected in parallel with the capacitor 25 between the source of TFT 24 and the adjacent row conductor 14 which comprises a further TFT, 27, acting as a switch and having a fairly sharply defined gate threshold, whose source and drain terminals are connected respectively to opposite sides of the capacitor 25, and control means for controlling the switching operation of the TFT 27. The control means includes a photosensitive device and comprises a potential divider circuit connected in parallel with the TFT 27 and consisting of a photosensitive resistor 28 and light shielded resistor 29 connected in series with the node between the two resistors, indicated at 30, being coupled to the gate terminal of the TFT 27.

The components 24, 25, 27, 28 and 29 of all the sensing elements in the array, together with their interconnections, are provided on the same supporting plate as the TFTs 20, the first electrodes 22 of the display elements 21, and the sets of row and column address conductors. The arrays of picture and sensing elements and the sets of row and column address conductors are fabricated on the supporting plate using technology commonly employed in the manufacture of active matrix liquid crystal display devices. This technology, which typically involves the deposition and definition of superimposed thin film layers, is well established and widely documented and it is not thought necessary therefore to describe here in detail such fabrication techniques. Examples of suitable manufacturing processes are described in the aforementioned US-A-4,345,248, details

of which are incorporated here by reference. The TFTs 20, 24 and 27 may comprise hydrogenated amorphous silicon TFTs, and the photo-resistors 28 and resistors 29 may comprise amorphous silicon material. The display element electrodes can comprise ITO, and the row and column conductors and the plates of the capacitors 25 may comprise metal, for example aluminium or chromium, or ITO. Other materials can of course be used, as will be apparent to persons skilled in the art.

The photosensitive device can comprise other forms of photo conductive devices which exhibit an increase in conductance in response to being illuminated. For example, a photo-diode, comprising a pin, nip, Schottky, or other like photo-diode, could be used. Also, the photosensitive element could be a kind of phototransistor in the form of a TFT whose gate is connected to its source. The resistor 29 could comprise a similar TFT which is shielded from light.

The integrated device is operated in a manner similar to that described EP-A-0491436. Briefly, and referring to Figure 1, the picture and sensing elements are driven by way of a row drive circuit 34, comprising a digital shift register, controlled by a timing and control circuit 35, and a column drive circuit 36, comprises a sample and hold circuit operated by a shift register to perform serial to parallel conversion on serial data supplied from the timing and control circuit 35. The circuit 34 applies a selection, (gating), signal to each row address conductor 14 in turn, and holds each conductor 14 at a reference potential level in the interval between successive selection signals. The TFTs 20 of the picture elements in a row are turned on by the selection signal on their associated row address conductor whereupon the data signals present on the column address conductors 16 are transferred to the respective display elements 21 of that row. Thus, the picture elements are driven in a conventional manner and light transmission through the display elements is modulated in accordance with the level of the applied data signal. Each display element can produce a range of display effects, i.e. grey scale, depending on the value of the assigned data signal. In a variant, the data signals may be binary signals producing a two level display output, light and dark, from the display elements. In this case the column drive circuit can be of simplified form comprising a digital circuit, for example a shift register circuit with latched outputs.

Each row of picture elements is addressed in this manner in sequence once in each successive field period.

In order to prevent degradation of the liquid crystal material, the polarity of the drive voltages applied to the display elements is periodically inverted, in accordance with known practice, for example after every field.

For reasons which will become apparent, part of the inverting column conductor data signals preferably is applied to the common electrode 23 of the display elements so that the range of data signal voltages present on the column conductors 16 is minimised.

The ends of the column address conductors 16 remote from the circuit 36 are connected to a detection circuit 40 which comprises a set of sense amplifiers, 50, one for each column conductor, whose function is to provide an output indicative of whether or not individual sensing elements 18, have been illuminated by, for example, a light pen referenced at 41 in Figure 1. The detection circuit periodically interrogates the sensing elements to sense the charge state of their capacitors 25, which for an element illuminated by the light differs from that for an element no so illuminated as will be explained, and provides an output in accordance therewith thus identifying those sensing elements subjected to illumination from the light pen in the interval between successive addressing. The light pen 41, which consists of a light source which continuously emits in operation a narrow, intense beam of light of a wavelength to which the photosensitive elements 28 of the sensing elements are responsive, can be moved over the display panel whereby sensing elements located under the path of travel of the light pen are illuminated. The detection of those sensing elements which have been illuminated in this manner, representing the pattern of the light pen movement, enables data or information to be written into the device. If a high resolution input is required, the size of the beam should be sufficiently narrow to illuminate only one sensing element of the array at any given time.

Examples of the signal waveforms applied to row and column address conductors in operation are illustrated in Figure 3, in which V_R and V_C are respectively the row and column voltage waveforms. The row selection signal comprises a pulse of duration T_r and magnitude V_g . For the remainder of the field period T_F , where T_F can be approximately equal to $m \cdot T_r$, the row conductor is held at a constant reference level V_O .

Successive data signals intended for picture elements in the same column, and having a range of possible values according to the display effects desired, are indicated at V_d and applied by the column driver circuit 36 to the column conductor 16 for a part only, shown at T_2 , of the duration of the selection signal. The circuit 36 is modified so as to present a high impedance to the column conductor in the intervals between successive data signals being applied and during these intervals a constant predetermined potential, indicated at V_x , is applied to the column conductor by the detection circuit 40. Thus during the first part, T_1 , of the row selection period T_r for a row address conductor 14 the column drive circuit is switched to a high impedance state and during the latter part, T_2 , of the row selection period the data signal V_d is applied to the column conductor 16 causing the display element 21 associated with these row and column conductors to be charged to a voltage, V_{LC} , given by:

$$V_{LC} = V_d - V_e$$

where V_e is the voltage of the electrode 23 common to all display elements.

The selection signal pulse V_g applied to the row conductor 14 also turns on the TFTs 24 of the associated row of sensing elements 18 whereby during the period T2 the capacitors 25 of the sensing elements are charged to a voltage level, V_s , according to the voltage present on their respective column conductor, given by:-

$$V_s = V_d - V_o$$

bearing in mind that the other side of the capacitors as this time is held at the reference level V_o . If the mean data signal voltage (V_d) is V_m and the range of possible data signal voltages is $2V_n$ then V_s can be in the range $(V_m + V_n - V_o)$ to $(V_m - V_n - V_o)$.

Following termination of the row selection signal (V_g) the TFTs 24, and the TFTs 20, are turned off, thereby isolating the capacitors 25 and display elements 21, until the row is next addressed in the subsequent field period.

If during the interval between successive addressing a sensing element is not written into by the light, the charge on its capacitor 25 will be unaffected, apart perhaps from some minor leakage. If, on the other hand, a sensing element is "written" with the light pen then its capacitor 25 will be discharged. During this interval the node 30 of the potential divider constituted by the photoresistor 28 and the light-shielded resistor 29 is positive with respect to the potential of the succeeding row conductor 14. The operation TFT 27, whose gate is connected to the node 30, is controlled by the potential divider. The voltage at node 30 is normally below the gate threshold voltage required to turn on the TFT 27. However when the intensity of light falling on the photoresistor 28 reaches or exceeds a certain value, as happens when the light pen is moved over the sensing element, the voltage at the node 30 increases and exceeds the threshold voltage of TFT 27 thereby turning it on and discharging the capacitor 25. The potential divider, 28 and 29, together with the TFT 27 therefore act in combination as an optical threshold circuit which operates to discharge the capacitor in response to the sensing element being subjected to a certain minimum light intensity level. The component values of the control means can readily be selected to provide different threshold levels as required. At the instant this minimum level is reached the TFT 27 rapidly discharges the capacitor 25. Ambient lighting levels are below this minimum and so without light pen illumination the TFT 27 remains off and the charge on capacitor 25 is retained. Thus the sensing element 18 is adapted to distinguish between light from the light pen and light from ambient surroundings and to provide a clear and definite reaction to illumination by the light pen.

At the start of the next row selection pulse signal applied to the row conductor 14, i.e. at the beginning of

period T1, the TFTs 20 and 24 associated with that row are again turned on. The voltage of the column conductors 16 at this time is set by the detection circuit 40 to V_x and the charging current required to charge the capacitors 25 and the display elements 21 to the column voltage V_x flows via the detection circuit 40 where it is sensed. For sensing elements which have been subjected only to ambient illumination in the preceding field period the amount of charging current which flows to their capacitors will be at most very low, bearing in mind that a capacitor 25 could previously have been charged to any voltage in the possible range of V_d , and the voltage across the capacitor 25 is now reset to $V_x - V_o$. The maximum charge flowing into a capacitor 25 will be substantially in the range $+2CV_n$ to $-2CV_n$, where C is the capacitance. In the case where a sensing element 18 has been written with the light pen then its capacitor 25 is discharged completely so that a charge $C(V_x - V_o)$ will flow into its capacitor 25.

The sense amplifiers of the detection circuit 40, which may be current or charge sensing amplifiers, are responsive to the charges supplied to the capacitors 25 in the period T1. After amplification in the sense amplifiers the signals produced as a result of the recharging of the capacitors 25 are passed to discrimination circuits of the detection circuit 40 whose outputs switch state according to whether or not that signal is indicative of a "written" or an "unwritten" sensing element.

The detection circuit 40 and its manner of operation is the same as that described in EP-A-0491436 to which reference is invited for further details. It should be appreciated however that other forms of detection circuit could be employed for sensing the states of the sensing elements as will be apparent to skilled persons. The serial, or parallel, output of the detection circuit 40 may be supplied to one input of a data processing circuit, with an associated memory device, which provides signals to the column driver circuit for display purposes, in similar manner to that described in US-A-4345248.

This operation of the detection circuit is repeated for each row of sense elements, in synchronism with the addressing of the rows of picture elements, so that the states of the array of sensing elements are determined over the course of the display field, the array being repeatedly addressed in this manner in successive display fields.

Figure 4 illustrates an alternative form of discharge circuit which can be used in the sensing elements. In this circuit, the control means controlling operation of the TFT 27 comprises a photovoltaic circuit rather than a photosensitive potential divider circuit as previously. The photovoltaic circuit consists of at least one, and preferably a plurality of series connected photodiodes 38 connected in parallel with a light shielded resistance 39 between the gate terminal of the TFT 27 and the row address conductor 14 and operating in photovoltaic mode. The control means responds to incident light to generate a voltage at the gate terminal of the TFT 27

according to the intensity of the incident light. The TFT 27 is operated when the intensity level of incident light is such as to cause a voltage at the gate terminal at or above the gate threshold voltage.

The invention is, as previously stated, applicable to optical touch input devices generally. For an embodiment of the optical touch input device providing solely an optical sensing function, the structure and operation of the device are considerably simplified compared with the above-described integrated display/optical touch sensing device. The panel 10 need then only comprise one supporting plate carrying the array of sensing elements 18 and row and column address conductors 14 and 16, again formed using thin film techniques as previously described. The circuitry on this supporting plate is protected by an overlying layer of optically transparent material, such as silicon nitride. The column driver circuit 36 is dispensed with. The row driver circuit 34 operates as before to select the row of sensing elements, one at a time in turn. During a row selection period, the detection circuit 40 operates to apply the predetermined potential V_x to the column conductors, so that the capacitors 25 of the row of sensing elements are charged to the level of $V_x - V_0$. If thereafter, and during the interval until that row is next selected, a sensing element in the row is illuminated with the light pen its capacitor is discharged, otherwise its charge remains substantially the same. Detection of those sensing elements which have been illuminated is accomplished in a relatively simple manner by the detection circuit 40 by sensing whether or not a charging current is required by the sensing elements at the next selection period.

Claims

1. An optical touch input device comprising an array of sensing elements (18), each of which sensing elements comprises a photosensitive device (28;38) responsive to a light input from a light source, a switching device (24), and a charge storage means (25) which is charged periodically by operation of the switching device, and detection means (40) connected to the sensing elements for detecting periodically the state of charge of their charge storage means, the photosensitive device (28;38) being included in a discharge circuit connected to the charge storage means (25), and characterised in that the discharge circuit (27,28,29;27,28,39) comprises a switch having a light intensity operational threshold characteristic and which independently of the operation of said switching device (24) switches to discharge the charge storage means in response to light falling on the photosensitive device (28; 38) which is at or above a predetermined minimum intensity level and which when the light falling on the photosensitive element is below the predetermined minimum intensity level does not switch to dis-
2. A device according to Claim 1, characterised in that the discharge switch circuit of each sensing element (18) includes switch means (27) connected across the charge storage means (25) and operable by control means (28, 29; 38, 39) comprising the photosensitive device (28; 38) to discharge the charge storage means.
3. A device according to Claim 2, characterised in that the control means comprises a photosensitive potential divider circuit (28, 29).
4. A device according to Claim 3, characterised in that photosensitive device comprises a photoconductive device whose conductance varies in accordance with the level of light incident thereon.
5. A device according to Claim 2, characterised in that the control means (38, 39) comprises photovoltaic means (38) which produces a voltage in response to light incident thereon.
6. A device according to Claim 5, characterised in that the photosensitive device comprises at least one photodiode (38).
7. A device according to any one of Claims 2 to 6, characterised in that the switch means (27) comprises a field effect transistor whose source and drain terminal are connected across the charge storage means (25) and whose gate terminal is connected to the control means (28, 29; 38, 39).
8. A device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the device includes sets of row and column address conductors (14,16) to which the sensing elements are connected via their switching devices (24) and a drive circuit (34,36,40) connected to the sets of address conductors for charging periodically the charge storage means via their associated switching devices by means of drive signals applied to the sets of address conductors.
9. A device according to Claim 8, characterised in that the switching device (24) of each sensing element (18) comprises a field effect transistor which is operable by selection signals applied by the drive circuit (34,36,40) to an address conductor (14) of one set to connect the charge storage means (25) of the sensing element to an address conductor (16) of the other set through which charging current is supplied to the charge storage means, and in that the detection means (40) is arranged to sense the charging current supplied to the charge storage devices upon operation of the switching device (24).

10. A combined input and output device comprising an optical touch input device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims together with an array of display elements (21), each having a display element electrode (22), for providing a display output, and in which the array of sensing elements (18) is integrated with the array of display element electrodes (22) on a common support.

Patentansprüche

1. Optische Berührungseingabeanordnung mit einer Anordnung von Fühlelementen (18), wobei jedes Fühlelement eine photoempfindliche Anordnung (28;38) aufweist, die empfindlich ist für eine Lichteingabe von einer Lichtquelle, mit einer Schaltvorrichtung (24) und mit einem Ladungsspeichermittel (25), das periodisch durch einen Vorgang der Schaltvorrichtung aufgeladen wird, und mit Detektionsmitteln (40), die mit den Fühlmitteln verbunden sind zur periodischen Detektion des Zustandes der Ladung der Ladungsspeichermittel, und wobei die photoempfindliche Anordnung (28;38), die einen Teil einer Entladungsschaltungsanordnung bildet, mit den Ladungsspeichermitteln (25) verbunden ist, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Entladungsschaltung (27, 28, 29; 27, 38, 39) einen Schalter aufweist mit einer Lichtintensitätsoperationsschwellencharakteristik, und die unabhängig von der Wirkung der genannten Schaltvorrichtung (24) umschaltet zum Entladen der Ladungsspeichermittel in Antwort auf Licht, das auf die photoempfindliche Anordnung (28;38) fällt, die sich auf einem vorbestimmten minimalen Intensitätspegel befindet oder etwas darüber und die, wenn das auf das photoempfindliche Element auftreffende Licht unterhalb eines vorbestimmten minimalen Intensitätspegels liegt, die Ladungsspeichermittel nicht zum Entladen umschaltet.
2. Anordnung nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Entladungsschaltung jedes Fühlelementes (18) Schaltmittel (27) aufweist, die über die Ladungsspeichermittel (25) verbunden sind und durch Steuermittel (28, 29; 38, 39) mit der photoempfindlichen Anordnung (28;29) zum Entladen der Ladungsspeichermittel betrieben werden können.
3. Anordnung nach Anspruch 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Steuermittel ein photoempfindliche Potentialteilerschaltung (28;29) aufweisen.
4. Anordnung nach Anspruch 3, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die photoempfindliche Anordnung eine photoleitende Anordnung aufweist, deren Leitfähigkeit entsprechend dem Pegel des darauf treffen-

- den Lichtes variiert.
5. Anordnung nach Anspruch 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Steuermittel (38,39) Photozellen (38) aufweisen, die eine Spannung erzeugen in Antwort auf darauf treffendes Licht.
 10. Anordnung nach Anspruch 5, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die photoempfindliche Anordnung wenigstens eine Photodiode (38) aufweist.
 15. Anordnung nach einem der Ansprüche 2 bis 6, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Schaltmittel (27) einen Feldeffekttransistor aufweisen, dessen Source-Elektrode und Drain-Elektrode über die Ladungsspeichermittel (25) verbunden sind und dessen Gate-Elektrode mit den Steuermitteln (28, 29; 38, 39) verbunden sind.
 20. Anordnung nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprüche, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Anordnung Sätze von Reihe- und Spaltenadreßleitern (14,16) aufweist, mit denen die Fühlelemente über die Schaltanordnungen (24) verbunden sind und daß mit den Sätzen von Adreßleitern zur periodischen Ladung der Ladungsspeichermittel über die zugeordneten Schaltanordnungen mittels Treibersignale, die den Sätzen von Adreßleitern zugeführt werden, eine Treiberschaltung (34,36,40) verbunden ist.
 25. Anordnung nach Anspruch 8, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Schaltvorrichtung (24) jedes Fühlelementes (18) einen Feldeffekttransistor aufweist, der durch Selektionssignale betrieben wird, die durch die Treiberschaltung (34,36,40) einem Adreßleiter (14) eines Satzes zugeführt werden zum Verbinden der Ladungsspeichermittel (25) des Fühlelementes mit einem Adreßleiter (16) des anderen Satzes, über den Ladungsstrom zu den Ladungsspeichermitteln zugeführt wird, und daß die Detektionsmittel (40) den der Ladungsspeicheranordnung zugeführten Ladungsstrom fühlen im Betrieb der Schaltvorrichtung (24).
 30. Kombinierte Eingabe- und Ausgabeanordnung mit einer optischen Berührungseingabeanordnung nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprüche zusammen mit einer Anordnung von Wiedergabeelementen (21), die je eine Wiedergabeelementelektrode (22) haben zum Liefern eines Wiedergabeausgangssignals, und wobei die Anordnung von Fühlelementen (18) mit der Anordnung von Wiedergabeelementelektroden (22) auf einem gemeinsamen Träger integriert sind.
 - 35.
 - 40.
 - 45.
 - 50.
 - 55.

Revendications

1. Dispositif d'entrée tactile optique comprenant un réseau d'éléments de détection (18), qui comprennent chacun un dispositif photosensible (28; 38) réagissant à une entrée de lumière provenant d'une source lumineuse, un dispositif de commutation (24) et un moyen de stockage de charge (25), qui est chargé périodiquement par le fonctionnement du dispositif de commutation, et un moyen de détection (40) connecté aux éléments de détection pour détecter périodiquement l'état de charge de leurs moyens de stockage de charge, le dispositif photosensible (28; 38) étant compris dans un circuit de décharge connecté au moyen de stockage de charge (25) et caractérisé en ce que le circuit de décharge (27, 28, 29; 27, 38, 39) comprend un commutateur ayant une caractéristique de seuil opérationnel d'intensité lumineuse et qui, indépendamment du fonctionnement du dispositif de commutation (24), commute afin de décharger le moyen de stockage de charge en réaction à la lumière tombant sur le dispositif photosensible (28; 38) qui est égale ou supérieure à un niveau d'intensité minimum prédéterminé et qui, lorsque la lumière tombant sur l'élément photosensible est inférieure au niveau d'intensité minimum prédéterminé, ne commute pas pour décharger le moyen de stockage de charge.
2. Dispositif suivant la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce que le circuit de commutation de décharge de chaque élément de détection (18) comprend un moyen de commutation (27) connecté aux bornes du moyen de stockage de charge (25) et pouvant être actionné par le moyen de commande (28, 29; 38, 39) comprenant le dispositif photosensible (28; 38) pour décharger le moyen de stockage de charge.
3. Dispositif suivant la revendication 2, caractérisé en ce que le moyen de commande comprend un circuit diviseur de tension photosensible (28, 29).
4. Dispositif suivant la revendication 3, caractérisé en ce que le dispositif photosensible comprend un dispositif photoconducteur dont la conductance varie conformément au niveau de la lumière incidente.
5. Dispositif suivant la revendication 2, caractérisé en ce que le moyen de commande (38, 39) comprend un moyen photovoltaïque (38) qui produit une tension en réaction à la lumière incidente.
6. Dispositif suivant la revendication 5, caractérisé en ce que le dispositif photosensible comprend au moins une photodiode (38).
7. Dispositif suivant quelconque des revendications 2 à 6, caractérisé en ce que le moyen de commutation (27) comprend un transistor à effet de champ dont les bornes de source et de drain sont connectées aux bornes du moyen de stockage de charge (25) et dont la borne de la grille est connectée au moyen de commande (28, 29; 38, 39).
8. Dispositif suivant l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, caractérisé en ce que le dispositif comprend des jeux de conducteurs d'adressage de lignes et de colonnes (14, 16) auxquels des éléments de détection sont connectés via leurs dispositifs de commutation (24) et un circuit d'excitation (34, 36, 40) connecté aux jeux de conducteurs d'adressage pour charger périodiquement le moyen de stockage de charge via leurs dispositifs de commutation associés au moyen de signaux d'excitation appliqués aux jeux de conducteurs d'adressage.
9. Dispositif suivant la revendication 8, caractérisé en ce que le dispositif de commutation (24) de chaque élément de détection (18) comprend un transistor à effet de champ qui peut être actionné par des signaux de sélection appliqués par le circuit d'excitation (34, 36, 40) à un conducteur d'adressage (14) d'un jeu de conducteurs pour connecter le moyen de stockage de charge (25) de l'élément de détection à un conducteur d'adressage (16) de l'autre jeu de conducteurs, par lequel le courant de charge est fourni au moyen de stockage de charge, et en ce que le moyen de détection (40) est à même de détecter le courant de charge fourni aux dispositifs de stockage de charge lors du fonctionnement du dispositif de commutation (24).
10. Dispositif combiné d'entrée et de sortie comprenant un dispositif d'entrée tactile optique suivant l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes avec un réseau d'éléments d'affichage (21), ayant chacun une électrode (22) d'élément d'affichage, destiné à délivrer une sortie d'affichage, et dans lequel le réseau d'éléments de détection (18) est intégré au réseau d'électrodes (22) d'élément d'affichage sur un support commun.

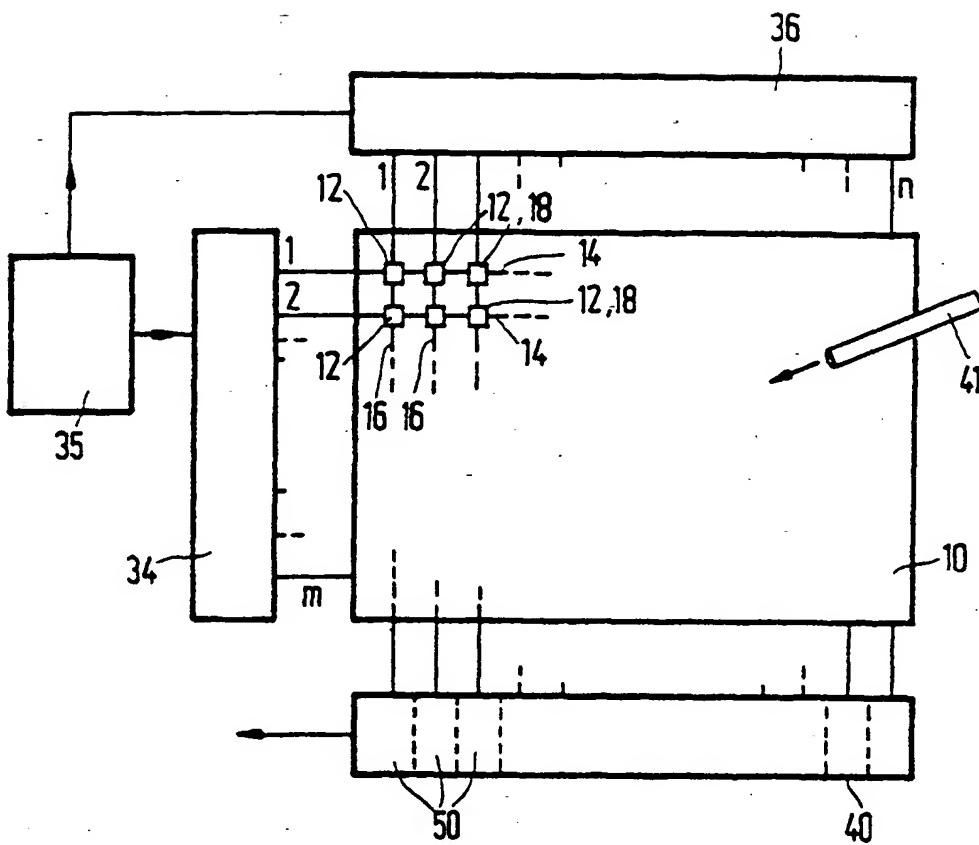


FIG.1

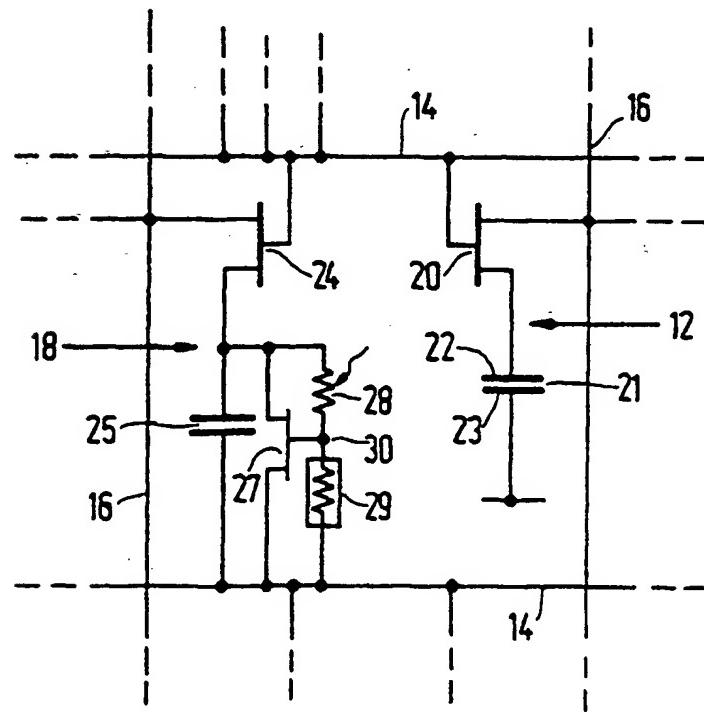


FIG.2

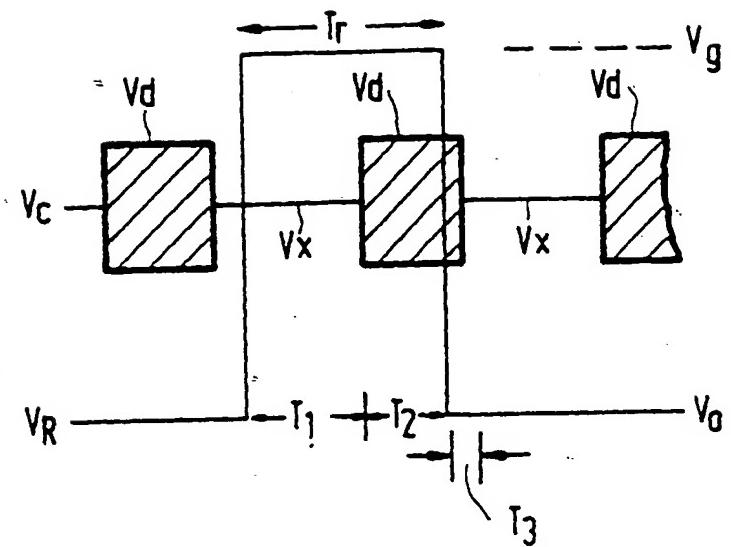


FIG. 3

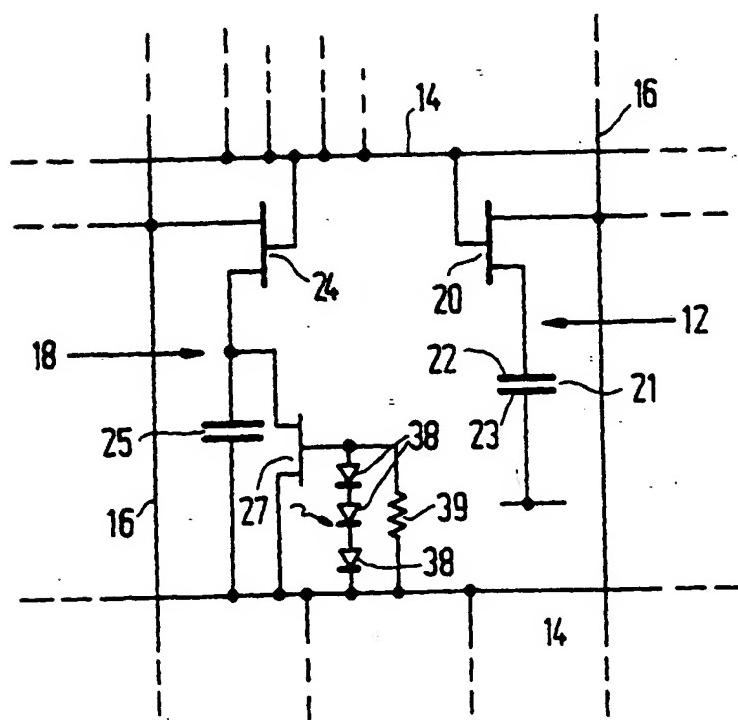


FIG. 4

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